

Women's Equality Day, 2000

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

In March of 1776, 4 months before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Abigail Adams sent a letter to her husband John in Philadelphia, where he was participating in the Second Continental Congress. "...n the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make," she wrote, "I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors." Almost a century and a half would pass before her desire was realized with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, guaranteeing women's suffrage.

The road to civic, economic, and social equality for women in our Nation has been long and arduous, marked by frustrations and setbacks, yet inspired by the courageous actions of many heroic Americans, women and men alike. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, Frederick Douglass, Lucy Stone--these and so many others refused to remain silent in the face of injustice. Speaking out at rallies, circulating pamphlets and petitions, lobbying State legislatures, risking public humiliation and even incarceration, suffragists slowly changed the minds of their fellow Americans and the laws of our Nation. Thanks to their efforts, by the mid-19th century some States recognized the right of women to own property and to sign contracts independent of their spouses. In 1890, Wyoming became the first State to recognize a woman's right to vote. Thirty years later, the 19th Amendment made women's suffrage the law of the land. But it would take another 40 years to pass the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which promised women the same salary for performing the same jobs as men, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed employment discrimination based on gender. Another 8 years would pass before Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 assured American women equal opportunity in education and sports programs.

However, the promise of true equality has yet to be realized. Despite historic changes in laws and attitudes, a significant wage gap between men and women persists, in traditional sectors as well as in emerging fields, such as information technology. While employment of computer scientists, programmers, and operators has increased at a breathtaking rate--by 80 percent since 1983--fewer than one in three of these high-wage jobs is filled by a woman. A recent report by the Council of Economic Advisers noted that, even after allowing for differences in education, age, and occupation, the wage gap between men and women in high-technology professions is still approximately 12 percent--a gap similar to that estimated in the labor market at large-- and that, in both the old economy and the new, the gap is even wider for women of color.

To combat unfair pay practices and to close the wage gap between men and women once and for all, I have called on the Congress to support my Administration's Equal Pay Initiative and to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. And in May of this year, I announced the creation of a new

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Equal Pay Task Force to empower EEOC field staff with the legal, technical, and investigatory support they need to pursue charges of pay discrimination and to take appropriate action whenever such discrimination occurs. I have also proposed in my fiscal 2001 budget an initiative under which the National Science Foundation will provide \$20 million in grants to postsecondary institutions and other organizations to promote the full participation of women in the science and technology fields.

Today, a new century lies before us, offering us a fresh opportunity to make real the promise that Abigail Adams dreamed of more than two centuries ago. As we celebrate Women's Equality Day and the 80th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, let us keep faith with our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters by removing any lingering barriers in their path to true equality.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 2000, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-sixth day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

William J. Clinton

Office of the Press Secretary
The White House
August 24, 1999

Women's Equality Day, 1999

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The theme for America's celebration of the coming millennium is "honor the past— imagine the future," a theme that could also describe our annual observance of Women's Equality Day. On this special day, we honor the past by remembering the decades-long struggle of visionary and determined women and men who fought for women's suffrage. Seventy-nine years ago, their efforts were rewarded with the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed women the right to vote and moved our Nation forward on the path toward equal civil and political rights for all Americans.

This year we also mark the 35th anniversary of another hard-fought victory for women's equality: the enactment of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which—among other things—prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of gender. Title VII guarantees women equal access to jobs, promotions, pay, and benefits, empowering them to provide for themselves and their families and to achieve their highest aspirations. This historic legislation benefits our entire Nation by strengthening America's workforce and economy through the contributions of millions of Americans whose talents in the past had too often been ignored or excluded.

We also celebrate Women's Equality Day by imagining the future—a future where women will receive equal pay for equal work, where our social structures will help women and men to balance better the responsibilities of job and family, where there will be no ceilings to prevent women from rising as far and as fast as their talents will take them. Such a future seems possible when we reflect on the extraordinary feats women have achieved this summer alone. The entire world was captivated by the energy, skill, teamwork, and determination of the women soccer players from around the globe who competed in the Women's World Cup; and all America rejoiced when the U.S. team won a breathtaking victory. Just 13 days later, Air Force Colonel Eileen Collins, commander of Space Shuttle Mission STS-93, became the first woman to command a mission in space.

With a rich past, an exciting present, and a future of limitless possibilities, women have much to celebrate on this Women's Equality Day, and all Americans have much to be grateful for as we reflect on the countless contributions women make to the quality of our lives and the well-being of our Nation.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1999, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fourth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., August 26, 1999]

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY, 1998

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since the earliest days of our democracy, Americans have taken great pride and found great purpose in our pursuit of equality. It is a right for which many have bravely struggled and the ideal that challenges us even today to build a more perfect union and to forge a future in which our children know no boundaries to their dreams. Each year, on Women's Equality Day, we rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of full equality for women and girls in our society.

This year, as we reflect on the magnificent journey and the extraordinary heroines and heroes of the women's rights movement in America, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the first women's rights convention, which took place in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and set our Nation on a course toward equality. It was at this historic gathering that pioneers such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott, Mary Ann McClintock, and Frederick Douglass signed the Declaration of Sentiments—a document unequivocally affirming that all men and women are created equal. Encouraged by the truth of their convictions, these determined women and men set out to make equality for women a reality in America.

In the decades following the convention at Seneca Falls, many of the rights expressed in the prophetic Declaration of Sentiments became law. The ratification of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution secured a woman's right to vote; the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 barred employment discrimination; and the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 guaranteed equal opportunity in education and sports.

This year, we recognize another milestone on the road to women's equality: the 35th anniversary of the enactment of the Equal Pay Act, which for the first time in our Nation's history guaranteed equal pay to women who perform the same jobs as men. Only a generation ago, a woman could legally be paid less for her time and talent solely because of her gender. Today, we realize that the denial of equal pay not only unfairly limits a woman's ability to provide for her family's economic security, but also diminishes her dignity by belittling the value of her labor.

While we have made progress in closing this pay gap in the 35 years since the enactment of the Equal Pay Act, women today continue to make less than men for

the same work--earning 76 cents for every dollar paid to a man. As we celebrate the Equal Pay Act's anniversary, we must reaffirm our commitment to making equal pay for equal work a reality in the workplace. My Administration supports new proposed legislation that will close the pay gap completely, strengthen enforcement of the Equal Pay Act, and toughen penalties for violations.

My Administration is striving to ensure women's equality in other areas of our society. We have dramatically increased the funding for research, prevention, and treatment of diseases that predominantly affect women. Through the Family and Medical Leave Act that I signed and our proposed child care initiative, we are working to help women balance their responsibilities at home and on the job. During the past 5 years, the Small Business Administration has tripled loans to women-owned businesses, and we have strengthened enforcement of Title IX to ensure that education programs, activities, and institutions receiving Federal funds do not discriminate on the basis of gender.

On Women's Equality Day, as we look back on what we have accomplished, we also recognize how far we have to go before we complete the journey that began so long ago. As women continue to distinguish themselves in boardrooms, classrooms, courtrooms, and family rooms across America, we must renew our efforts to empower all women with the rights and opportunities promised by our founders and fought for by the heroic women and men whose achievements we honor today

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1998, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twentieth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Office of the Press Secretary
The White House
August 19, 1997

Women's Equality Day, 1997

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Each year, on Women's Equality Day, we reflect on how far we have traveled on our journey to make America live up to the ideals of justice and equality articulated so powerfully in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Few constitutional amendments have affected that progress more profoundly than the 19th, which guarantees American women the right to vote.

Looking back from today's vantage point, where women hold positions of authority and responsibility at almost every level of government, it is hard to imagine that, for almost a century and a half, women were barred from exercising the most fundamental right of every democracy. There are women still living among us who can remember a time when they were prevented, by law, from having a role in shaping the destiny of their country and the impact of government on their own and their families' lives. But thanks to women and men of extraordinary courage and conviction, who waged for years a determined campaign for women's suffrage, the 19th Amendment was ratified in August of 1920 and opened the door for generations of American women to add their vision and voices to our national discourse.

This year, we mark another milestone in the life of our democracy: the 25th anniversary of the enactment of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX, building on the spirit of the 19th Amendment, prohibits discrimination against women in education and sports programs. For a quarter-century, it has enabled American girls and women to make the most of their abilities, to dream big dreams, and, more important, to achieve those dreams. In large measure, because of the 19th Amendment and Title IX, our Nation has reaped the rewards of women's talents, accomplishments, wisdom, and perspective. In every activity and profession, in the home and outside—as astronauts and professional athletes, as teachers and university presidents, as farmers and firefighters, as caregivers, Cabinet members, and Supreme Court Justices—women have made lasting contributions to the quality of our lives and the strength of our democracy.

Today, as Americans engage in a serious and profoundly important dialogue on the future of our multiracial, multiethnic, multicultural society, we do well to remember that we are all immeasurably enriched when we choose the path of inclusion and empowerment. Women's Equality Day and the anniversary of Title IX remind us that by demanding an equal opportunity for every American, we ensure a brighter future for all Americans.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1997, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to

observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this nineteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-second.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:16 a.m., August 20, 1997]

Office of the Press Secretary
The White House
August 21, 1996

Women's Equality Day, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Since America's earliest days, our citizens have engaged in a passionate struggle to create a Nation where all can enjoy the benefits of democracy in equal measure. In 1920, we took a great step toward that noble goal by declaring that the right to vote could not be denied on the basis of gender. This 76th anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution gives us an opportunity to celebrate the advances made in empowering women to fully participate in the political, cultural, social, and economic life of our country.

At long last we are seeing the fruits of our efforts to establish a society made strong by its vast diversity—a place where women not only make gains in traditionally male fields, but also use their talents and perspectives to enlarge the scope of public life. The extraordinary success of our female athletes at the Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta is one stirring example of this progress. Historically excluded from so many arenas, today's women are carrying a shining torch of hope for younger generations to follow.

Now the challenge is to keep the doors of opportunity open and to build on the changes begun by the ratification of the 19th Amendment. We must continue to encourage women to pursue elected office and to contribute to the civil discourse. Every American stands to gain when women and men of all backgrounds participate in the political process and exercise their right to vote. This is a right that we must never take for granted—and a responsibility we must never shirk—because it gives each of us a voice in our national debate and calls every citizen to join in the pursuit of our Nation's fundamental ideals.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1996, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon all Americans to reflect on both the struggles and accomplishments of all women and to promote the observance of this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:49 a.m., August 22, 1996]

Office of the Press Secretary
The White House
August 17, 1995

Women's Equality Day, 1995
By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

Seventy-five years ago this Nation took a great step forward by ratifying the 19th Amendment to the Constitution. Twenty-eight simple words—"The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex"—brought to a triumphant conclusion the long decades of struggle waged by generations of suffragists. Looking back from the vantage point of the present, when the contributions and influence of women enrich every facet of our national life, it seems remarkable that as recently as 1920 most American women were still denied their right to full participation in the political activity of this country. Our history continues to remind us that humanity's age-old enemies of ignorance and prejudice are not easily defeated.

But defeated they were, by an army of women and men who, inspired by the staunch courage and unswerving commitment of leaders like Susan B. Anthony, changed people's minds and the course of U.S. history. Using the classic tools of democracy—assembly and petition, exhortation and example, peaceful protest and political shrewdness—these champions of liberty won a lasting victory for civil rights. The fight was hard, the margins slim, and the outcome often in doubt. But after years of effort and sacrifice, after countless acts of courage and conscience, advocates of women's suffrage rejoiced as the Congress proposed an amendment to the Constitution in 1919 and as Tennessee, the last State needed for ratification, approved that amendment on August 18, 1920, by a single vote, when a young legislator heeded his mother's plea to support suffrage. On August 26, 1920, the 19th Amendment was finally proclaimed part of the United States Constitution, fulfilling Susan B. Anthony's pledge that "failure is impossible."

Women's Equality Day, while a fitting occasion to commemorate this great victory of wisdom over ignorance, is also a time for sober reflection that American democracy is a work in progress. The Declaration of Independence was only the first step in our long journey toward equality for all Americans. And while we have made much progress, until all women have an equal opportunity to develop their full potential and to make contributions that are accepted and welcomed by our society, our freedom as a Nation will be incomplete.

Let us observe Women's Equality Day, then, both as a celebration of past achievement and a promise for the future: a promise to promote and protect with vigor and vigilance the rights of all our citizens; a promise to decry the policies of exclusion and to pursue the ideal of equality for every American; and a promise to empower all of our people to take their rightful place as full and equal partners in the great American enterprise.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1995, as "Women's Equality Day." I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this sixteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twentieth.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 11:32 a.m., August 17, 1995]

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY, 1994

By the President of the United States of America A Proclamation

Seventy-four years ago, the 19th Amendment was ratified, granting women the right to vote after many years of painstaking struggle and hard work by courageous suffragists. Empowered by the efforts of the brave and pioneering women who came before them, women today have secured positions as leaders in industry, government, and academia. They serve as role models in every aspect of our society.

The 19th Amendment did more than secure the right to vote for women. It recognized and affirmed the fundamental principle upon which this great Nation was founded -- equality -- "that all [persons] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." The ratification of the 19th Amendment was an important step toward ensuring that the civil and political rights guaranteed by the Constitution would truly be the equal rights of all Americans.

By recognizing this previously disenfranchised segment of our society, the 19th Amendment became one of the landmark civil rights laws in America, standing side by side with the Emancipation Proclamation, and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments. This year also marks the 4th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the 30th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as the 40th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*. These laws and that pivotal decision, along with the 19th Amendment, have marked the history of our Nation's progress in guaranteeing that every member of our society is treated equally under the law.

We observe "Women's Equality Day" to commemorate the ratification of the 19th Amendment almost three-quarters of a century ago. As we do so, we also honor the important contributions and achievements of women in this country, and we commit ourselves anew to fulfilling our obligation to promote equality for all Americans.

The famous woman suffragist, Helen H. Gardener, advised the Congress in calling for passage of the 19th Amendment:

Let us either stop our pretence before the nations of the earth of being a republic and having "equality before the law" or else let us become the republic we pretend to be.

To further celebrate and commemorate the 19th Amendment this year, let us not take for granted our precious right to vote, and let us rededicate ourselves to removing the barriers that remain in women's paths.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim August 26, 1994, as Women's Equality Day. I call upon the citizens of our great Nation to observe this day with appropriate programs and activities.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and nineteenth.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Office of the Press Secretary
The White House
August 18, 1993

WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY, 1993

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

On August 26, 1993, we celebrate the 73rd anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. In declaring that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged on account of sex, the Nineteenth Amendment guaranteed for women the most cherished prerogative of American citizenship.

Since America was founded, women have demonstrated an active interest in shaping the practice of democratic government. But it was not until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment that women's myriad contributions to the social, cultural, and economic life of our Nation began to receive the full acknowledgment they deserved. As women's voices continue to gain strength in the political arena, female elected officials at every level of government bring crucial insight to the decision-making process.

The struggle for true equality among the sexes has not been limited to the public sphere. Broadening the franchise fundamentally changed our understanding of equal opportunity, helping to encourage shared responsibility in the home and personal growth in the work place. Today, more and more women are leading the way through advancements in law, science, business, and the arts. As we approach the 21st century, women's unfailing strength and wisdom remain integral to ensuring the lasting prosperity of our Nation.

Each year, we observe August 26 as "Women's Equality Day," to honor the infinite sacrifices and contributions that women have made to the United States. On this occasion we reaffirm our national commitment to the distinctly American promise of guaranteed equality for all our people.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this eighteenth day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighteenth.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON